

SENTIMENTAL DISCOURSES

U P O N

RELIGION AND MORALITY.



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h
BY A L A D Y.

Beauty and wit will die; learning will vanish away, and all the arts of life be soon forgotten:—but virtue will remain for ever. This alone is honour, wealth, and happiness. Secure this, and you secure every thing;—lose this—and all is lost for ever!

Dis. I.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR T. BECKET IN THE STRAND.

M.DCC.LXXVI.

SENTIMENTAL DISCOURSES

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RELIGION AND MORALITY

BY A LADY.



It is not only the duty of the
the state, but it is the duty of the
the state. This is the duty of the
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the state. This is the duty of the

L O N D O N

Printed for T. BAKER, in the Strand.

M. DCCCLXXI.

To the PUBLIC.

HOWEVER audacious the Freethinker and the Libertine be, I hope they will not charge me with vanity for rising in support of VIRTUE. No such mean motive as the desire of being admired, hath given birth to the following sentimental discourses upon *Religion* and *Morality*.

The art of pleasing the ear without instructing the mind; I neither value nor am ambitious to possess:

possess: too common is that insidious eloquence, which treats of the passions, only to add to their destructive poison.

Never shall I repent the abuse of my understanding—never shall it be said of me, I have courted the esteem of the world at the expence of my reason.

To those who are yet untainted with the vices or follies of the age I dedicate this work: for them only I have written it:—should I be so happy as to fortify in their
breasts

breasts the love of their duties, I
would pride in my success, and
find in it my reward.

I desire the love of their duties

and would prize 8 00 63

and in it my reward

DISCOURSE I.

1 Cor. x. 12.

Let him that thinketh he standeth
take heed lest he fall.

IT is well for man to be conscious of his virtue: for the persuasion that he is a good and honest man, will not only increase the love of his duties, but fix him in the practice of them. We may even indulge him in speaking of his merit to his friends, because he will not do it through vanity: but to inspire him with the sentiments which are the comfort and delight of his life.

*The good and benevolent disposition
treasures up a fund of true and useful*

A

knowledge

knowledge in the spring of life, well knowing he stands the best chance of spending the winter of it with complacency and satisfaction. By an early exertion of the intellectual faculties, he learns to meet calamities without surprize, and to bear them with patience and resignation. His reliance in the Supreme Being may be expressed in the following beautiful lines :

Should *Fate* command me to the farthest verge
Of the green earth, to distant barbarous climes,
Rivers unknown to song ; where first the sun
Gilds Indian mountains, or his setting beam
Flames on th' Atlantic isles, 'tis nought to me :
Since GOD is ever present, ever felt,
In the void waste as in the city full ;
And where *He* vital breathes there must be joy.
When even at last the solemn hour shall come,
And wing my mystic flight to future worlds !
I chearful will obey.

Examples

Examples of virtue are not always sufficient to deter us from vice. To the examples of the virtuous, we should add instruction: not to give it is a crime, which the fear of being charged with pride cannot justify. So long as our actions correspond with the precepts we recommend, we need not care for the opinion of others: therefore, let no person be prevailed upon, by a false delicacy, from declaring himself a votary to virtue, and becoming himself an useful member of society.

Though you have triumphed over many temptations, be cautious how you expose yourself to danger. For as one instant only is between life and death, so from virtue to vice there is often but one step: unless upon perpetual guard, you may be surprized and overcome.

A 2

Pleasure,

Pleasure, under a thousand various shapes, is always in arms against you : sometimes he attacks openly, but more commonly he lies in ambush to ensnare you. Join, therefore, in the words of the Christian moralist, who says,

hardly depend upon ourselves for a constancy in the practice of virtue. Our hearts, whose emotions to-day we can controul, may to-morrow take the lead, and command our reason. Experience tells us the nature of our feelings, but does not screen us against their effects: we all know the extent of our duties, yet how few perform them!

Conscious of your own frailty, trust not to your hatred of vice for the conquest of it; but carefully avoid those objects you know yourself, upon reflection, incapable to resist. The truly brave does not go rashly before the danger he can avoid; he is never so confident of success, but he calls his discretion and prudence to his assistance. Act as he does, if you will run with honour the career you have entered into: for unless

you go on as you have begun, you may return to the same point from whence you started.

Women! if you listen to the language of flattery, you will approve of the man that speaks it. Though vice be dormant in your hearts, the poison is still in it: and should your neglect give it activity, what remedy would you employ against it? would you not then lie under the necessity of a foible, nay, under the very love of it?

Men! how long shall you pride in your sobriety, who follow the drunkard in his nocturnal revels? can you expect to be calm in the midst of the storm? the glass offered by friendship will you always be able to refuse? think of the ridicule thrown away upon the temperate

rate

rate and the virtuous ; of the malignant whispers that pass round with the bottle, which declares both a contempt of you, and a wish of your absence. Think on the disagreeable interpretation they will give of your aversion to the life they delight in. Are you not afraid of so many enemies united against you ? beware of that pride that will persuade you to brave them. Vanity, friendship, self-interest are wants as craving as those of nature. You live in society ; can you be devoid of passions, and free from the danger that attend them ? no ; on the contrary, the heart becomes insensibly corrupted, and the next step is an open and avowed libertinism : then by every art of seduction, the weaker sex is robbed of their peace, their honour, and their virtue.

Be it remembered, O perfidious man! that he who can please himself with the seduction of innocence, under the mask of honourable attachment, must be of a disposition peculiarly vile, malignant, and corrupt. That monster in human shape, who can desert an infatuated woman, after she has put herself entirely in his power, and boasts of his perfidy, is only fit for "*Treasons, Stratagems, and Spoils.*" Such a being disgraces his species, and deserves an ignominious death more than a common robber; because he has taken from her, "That which not enriches him, but makes *her* poor indeed."

Ambition is a vice which precludes virtue. Whoever thirsts after riches, places, or dignities, is, through necessity, compelled to make the sacrifice of himself

himself to the will of others: in this situation, the man who thinks himself wise, is either a fool or an impostor. Avoid that path; for the few flowers you will gather in it, you will meet with a multitude of thorns. When we once give way to ambition, we adopt gradually its spirit. Like love it is a seducing passion: it will make children of those whose minds are not strengthened by reason, against the intoxicating illusion. If a man should venture in a road he knows to be full of precipices, can he assure himself to escape the danger?—the world is that dangerous road, and our passions are the precipices.

One virtue does not acquit us with GOD and man. A woman who is faithful to her conjugal oath, will that single duty expiate for her pride or
injustice,

injustice, her slander and hypocrisy, her love of dissipation and extravagance? no; the rule of human duty is of a greater latitude: we have as many obligations upon us, as there are virtues prescribed by religion and society.

How insidious and innumerable are the ways that lead to vice and error! Who has that attention requisite to keep human nature within the limits of order and morality? for if the most discreet walk with a trembling step in the safe road of virtue, what will become of those who choose that which is the most slippery and dangerous? Wisdom, indeed, is the work of much labour, patience, and industry. To be absolute masters of yourselves, it is indispensable you should take as much pains for virtue, as the voluptuary does for pleasure.

The

The maxim is, know your strength before you expose yourself to temptation. When you find it flatters your imagination, fly: if you hesitate you are undone. Indulge not in thought a desire it would be criminal to gratify. That reverie is a friend to vice: it weakens your fortitude, and will insensibly corrupt your heart. For should chance offer an opportunity to realize the picture you have so fondly drawn and cherished in your imagination, would not your virtue be beggared of its powers of resistance? at those delusive hours, when your senses dictate to your reason, what will restore you to the feelings of your duty? Consider well the following

POURTRAIT:

*The principal productions of vice are
anguish, uproar, remorse, and death.*

Other

Other evils may in the end prove to be real benefits, but this is eternally and unchangeably evil. Vice becomes the bane of every heart into which it enters, the certain ruin of all who do not fly its dread dominion, and the sting and misery in every other calamity which afflicts us.

There is no object in nature so hideous as a reasonable being defiled with guilt, living in contradiction to the remonstrances of his understanding, trampling on the laws of his Creator, and opposing himself to the obligations of truth and righteousness. Were vice to become predominant through the whole creation, what devastations of anarchy and misery would spread throughout this great and mighty universe? how would it annihilate and deface the amazing beauty of God's works, and involve them into one
universal

universal midnight and ruin? What a momentous declaration, when we cannot indulge one irregular desire, or wrong thought, without taking a step towards all that is terrible! the defacing of the creation, and overturning the law, order, and harmony of the world!

Vice has made such gigantic strides, that its malignant effects are unhappily felt through all the nations under the canopy of heaven. From this pernicious source proceed numberless calamities, ever surrounding us, and mingling its bitter cup of disappointments, diseases, and vexations, with all the comforts and conveniences of life. This cruel enemy opposes man to man, tortures the body with pains, and the mind with remorse. It produces strife, faction, revenge, oppression, and sedition. Vice embroils

broils society, robs peace from life, and hope from death. Vice, hateful vice! arms nature, and the God of nature, against us; although it has been the business of all ages to restrain its deadly influence, by various institutions, modes of government, decrees, and laws. It is therefore a matter of the utmost concern to reflect what vice is, in its nature and tendency. In that case, we shall find we can hardly entertain too dreadful an idea of the punishments that are denounced against its votaries, nor be too solicitous in extirpating all the remains of it from our tempers and lives. How must the vicious tremble, when in the cool hour of reflection they must know, that a period will assuredly come, when they shall be separated from the virtuous; when the natural tendency of things will be no more interrupted in their operation, and when every

every one will receive the just reward of their good or evil actions !

Remember, O my sex ! that the accomplishments you hold from nature are only the effect of her partiality : beauty is an accidental good, which, like gold, may prove destructive to the happiness of its possessor. If you do not adorn your mind with the knowledge of your duties, and exercise its faculties in the practice of them, you are that flattering toy which dazzles the eye of a fool, and is despised by the sensible man.

Real and genuine beauty consists in the art of pleasing : and that art is a strict and constant adherence to the laws of decorum and virtue. The passions
caused

caused by beauty alone are like the caprice of infancy, they vanish as soon as they are tasted. Pride not in an accomplishment which ought to be less valuable in your eye that you have not the merit of it: force men to pay their homage to the perfections you have acquired. Leave to the young, handsome, thoughtless woman, her circle of adorers. Envy not the language she hears, nor the admiration she causes: for however flattering the appearances, they are the satire of her understanding.

Remember also, O you men! that you attend to the duties of the station you are in. Be contented with what you possess, and with what you can lawfully enjoy. Cast not an invidious eye upon the splendour of your superiors, the prosperity of your neighbour,

or the preference that is given him over you. Imitate, persevere, and love what is just and amiable. Through envy do not make yourself either ridiculous or contemptible. Happiness does not centre in birth, riches, talents, or the comeliness of the face : be pious, liberal, and charitable, and you shall be happy.

Could you, when you go abroad, leave your feelings at home, and carry your reason only ; could you, when you are at home, forget the allurements of the world, and apply solely to the cultivation of your understanding, to the care of your family, you would want no advice : but when are you not men ? at what time would it be improper to tell you ?

Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

B

That

That is a filly pride, which thinks itself capable of flattering our sensibility at the will of reason; which thinks itself above the want of correction, or the temptation of pleasure. A man that enjoys a perfect state of health, is he to conclude he never shall be sick? ought he to brave wantonly the inclemency of the season, and venture on hardships superior to his strength? does the prudent pilot wish for storms that he may exert his skill? no; in the calm he prepares himself against them, and is always ready to oppose their fury. As in the apparent harmless cloud he sees a tempest, so in the most trifling affairs you ought to discover the creator of your passions: for tastes may turn into affections, and affections into forcible wants. A desire you do not check at its birth will grow, and possibly take such a root in your heart,

heart, as to brave all your attempts to eradicate. Passions are extremely delusive when habit has given them a sway over us: they borrow the language of reason, and are the more seducing, that we often mistake our submission to them for an obedience to the dictates of the latter. Thus love, unknown to us, succeeds friendship; ambition, to the necessity of improving our fortune; avarice, to œconomy; contempt, to indifference; and hatred, to dislike.

There is not one caprice, however apparently trifling, which may not at length prove fatal to our virtue. Like a fever which in the beginning would have easily yielded to a common remedy, grows malignant through neglect, baffles the ingenuity of the most expert physician,

the poison gathers strength from our weakness, and becomes incurable. If, therefore, you will insure your happiness both here and hereafter, take virtue for your guide. The path is strewed with roses: the end of which is heaven, and the promised reward of endless bliss!

VIRTUE is the foundation of all honour and esteem; the source of all beauty, order, and happiness in nature. Virtue confers value on all endowments and qualities of a reasonable being; without which, the more eminent they be, the more hideous their deformities, and the greater curses will they inevitably become.

*The many excellent qualifications and powers we possess, and of which we are
generall*

generally too vain, will cease with the present state: but virtue will be our ornament and dignity in every state to which we may be removed. *Virtue unites us to the whole rational creation; fits us for conversing with any order of superior natures, and for a place in any mansion formed by the Almighty Architect.*

Virtue procures us also the approbation of the wise and good, and renders them our allies and friends. But what is of unspeakably greater moment, is, that it makes the Eternal Jehovah our friend; it assimilates and unites our minds to His, and engages His almighty power in our defence and preservation. Virtue is the law of the whole universe; it stands foremost in the estimation of Omnipotence; its origin is His nature, and it is the only thing that makes Him lovely. In fine, beauty and

wit will die, learning will vanish away,
and all the arts of life be soon forgotten;
but virtue will remain for ever. This
alone is honour, wealth, and happiness. Se-
cure this, and you secure every thing; lose
this, and all is lost for ever!

Matthew 7-12
DISCOURSE II.

Mat. vii. 12.

Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them ; for this is the law and the prophets.

THAT precept is religion itself. From the practice of it will arise all the virtues beneficial to mankind : it holds nature in chains, and suffers virtue only to sway over us. Was that precept faithfully and universally observed, there would be no moral evil in the world : all would be then in peace and innocence. Glorious state ! It was not given to men to enjoy it. The all-

righteous Creator had his reasons for not making us so perfect; and for leaving us to choose between truth and error. He gave us reason to guide us in the thorny path of life, and passions to oppose her dictates and ennoble her triumph. Were it not for the struggles between nature and virtue, which require the constant exertion of the excellent faculties we are endowed with, we should not have a superiority to boast over the animal creation. A victory obtained over a weak enemy does not intitle the conqueror to our applause and admiration, and the esteem of himself. It is by the difficulty we find to be good, just, chaste, and generous, that we desire to be so happy in this world; and to participate of the everlasting bliss, promised to the virtuous in the world to come.

Would

Would we purchase true felicity, we must follow the dictates of morality and religion.

Here is firm footing; here is solid rock;
 This can support us; all is sea besides;
 Sinks under us, bestorms, and then devours.
 His hand the good man fastens on the skies,
 And bids earth roll, nor feels her idle whirl.

Morality and religion forcibly recommend us to keep our passions in a due subjection, and practice the great virtues of piety, benevolence, and justice. In performing these essential duties, we shall soon experience a serenity of mind, which vice, and the follies of life, can never give. You will enjoy a satisfaction unallayed by remorse; you will be enabled to bear affliction with a chearful resignation; you will feel the transport
 of

of a conscious integrity, and be truly sensible that you are enjoying and pursuing the unerring path that leads to eternal happiness. But by way of contrast, let me portray the outlines of a
DOUBLE-MINDED MAN.

This unhappy wretch is irresolute in his views and desires ; his mind is divided between God and the world. He retains his pride, covetousness, and self-sufficiency ; and yet he dares not cast off all regard for religion and morality : he dares not renounce Christianity and his conscience, but would wish to be considered in a religious point of view by other men. When in his cool moments of reflection he is full of self-reprobation, he blames his temper and conduct, and calls himself a fool for being passionately attached to the vanities of life, and living so forgetful of eternity,

eternity. Then he forms good resolutions, and becomes a candidate for God, heaven, and immortality. But, alas! like a morning cloud, or as the early dew, it vanishes. Again he emerges into the world: his soul pants after the goods of this life, and his unruly passions are again called into action. The prospect of gain, pleasure, or preferment, transports him; he breaks through every moral obligation to accomplish his ruling passion. Conscience is hushed, and he is now assured that worldly gain is substantial good: the aggrandizement of his fortune is his god, and he will adore no other deity. In this idolatry he is zealous and devout, till interrupted by the return of that Holy Day, when he is called off from business to the worship of the true God. Again his mind begins to be serious, and again to be devout: till as
before,

before, he mixes with the world, and conscience is forgotten.

Hatred, ambition, avarice, and love are the enemies we have to combat with : they are the effects of a social life, and have sometimes such an influence over us, as to make us despise death, nay, even the fear of infamy for their gratification. To correct those passions, we have reason, which is a sufficient guard against them. The power of reason proves irresistible, when we make a proper use of it. There is no sacrifice, however painful, of which it does not prove its absolute necessity ; no duty, however seemingly severe in the practice, which it does not persuade us to perform. A deviation from its dictates leads indispensably to crime, vice, or folly.

Believe

Believe not that man who tells you it is impossible to be virtuous. In the midst of a circle of hypocrites, knaves, and libertines, the task seems difficult, but not impracticable. He is truly a weak man whom the charms of pleasure has so far intoxicated, as to deprive him of his understanding. When the illusion of that pleasure is over, he will be ashamed of his defeat, and convince you by his sorrow, that he wishes he had made a nobler resistance, and not given way to a folly of passion he might have conquered.

The contrition of a man, after he has committed a sin, or done an ungenerous action, is an incontestible proof of his knowing he has acted wrong. In his own conscience he finds a punishment the penal law could not inflict, could he be free even from remorse. Can a man be sensible

to your contempt, whom the fear of his GOD would not tie to the performance of his social duties ? Though man, by bad education, becomes foolish and vicious, he always carries in his breast the fear of GOD, and the love of virtue : they are oftener his counsels in his situation of life, than laws and punishments. Indeed, were he not awed by those secret and all-powerful monitors, it would be insufficient to keep him from the road of vice.

The man who consecrates his hour
By vig'rous efforts, and an honest aim,
At once he draws the sling of life and death ;
He walks with nature, and her paths are peace.

We stand in no need of temptation
to discern between what is just and
what is lawful : the heavenly precept
is,

is, " Whatsoever you would that men
 " should do to you, do ye even so to
 " them." The ignorant can, no more
 than the learned, mistake his proper
 conduct towards mankind. The prin-
 ciple of his duty is in himself: it creates
 his thoughts, desires, and affections.
 Whatever self-preservation tells him to
 be destructive to his peace and happi-
 ness, he must consider as prejudicial to
 others; and keep therefore from doing,
 what he would look upon as an injury
 should it be done to him. However,
 the AVARICIOUS MAN in particular is
 steeled against this divine precept, as
 is evident by the following TRAITS of
 his real character:

*Envy, hatred, distrust, and malice
 are the sure attendants of an avaricious
 man.*

man. Concord, that universal good, is entirely abolished by avarice. Every public virtue, every private obligation of duty, gratitude, and natural affection is sacrificed to partial and self-interested views; to obtain which, neither secret fraud nor even open violence is spared. He swells with arrogance, and he boasts in the multitude of his riches. His thoughts are alienated from his God, and he becomes careless to the performance of those duties which would insure happiness here and hereafter. His sole views are the aggrandizement of things temporal, without any regard to the momentous concerns of eternity. Foolish man! how must he shudder when conscience whispers in his ear, what will it avail to have been great or rich? or what will it profit to gain the whole world and lose your own soul?

This

This precept here enjoined is but one branch of our duty, and the least important in point of morality, as it requires but a small share of wisdom to perform it: for unless his heart be *steeled* against the feelings of humanity, he will never seek his happiness in the disgrace or ruin of his fellow creatures, who in their conduct towards him, have not deserved either his hatred or displeasure.

However savage the disposition of man, he will not wantonly steal, murder, rob a neighbour of his property, or disturb the peace of his family. Besides, there are men so happily studious of religion, as to correct an evil inclination; and whom their enlightened sensibility makes unhappy at the sight of the unfortunate, or even at the bare narra-
C
tive

tive of their misfortunes. Every one of us has been favoured with the ability of knowing the right from the wrong, and of making it the rule of our life. It is the abuse of this knowledge which marks the apparent difference we see among us ; a difference which has no reality in it ; a difference which would vanish, were we not in a greater or less degree, slaves to our passions.

From the sovereign contempt some have for riches, we must not infer, they were born insensible to its charms. 'Tis more rational to believe, that religion and philosophy have shown them their danger and vanity ; and that through principle and choice, they despise what others esteem the most. Whoever has read the human heart knows, that prince and peasant are equally the
children

children of nature ; equally a compound of vice and virtue, of wisdom and folly. And that though their rank be at the extremes of grandeur and meanness, they think, feel, and reason alike. Wants are as craving in the breast of the poor as in that of the rich ; and the desire of being happy as strong a passion in the humble attendant, as in that of his lord. 'Tis not from the importance of an object, but from the impression it makes upon us, that our feelings ought to be estimated. Alexander, that illustrious madman, who wept for not having several worlds to conquer, was not perhaps more distracted by foreseeing a term to his glory, than a courtier, for a mark of honour bestowed on the man he mortally hates ; or a poor young countryman for the loss of a trifling gift from the hand of her whom he tenderly loves.

No man is without envy, without ambition, without the desire of some good; which the less hopes he has to possess, the more eagerly he pants after it. The voluptuary wonders in vain that there are men who delight in temperance: in vain to justify his extreme folly, does he pretend, that they are of a nature superior to his own. It is all affectation. That contemptible slave to sensuality wants to be deluded, and to silence the remorse which follows him in the midst of dissipation and luxury.

When we investigate the wishes of mankind, we quickly discover that they terminate in something they erroneously call pleasure. It is, indeed, diversified into many distinct branches, but for the most part of them, they may be comprized

prized under one general head—*Sensuality*.

The depravity of human nature is such, that corporeal pleasures stand highest in the estimation of the multitude: they totally neglect to cultivate those of a superior nature, the faculties of the mind, the understanding, and the will. They are ignorant or inattentive to the important knowledge, that our rational powers ennoble the dignity of our being, and that also our sublimest pleasures must arise from the exertion of those powers.

They who persevere in a vulgar practice of reason and virtue, will soon discover such astonishing difference between intellectual and corporeal pleasures, that they would immediately reject the latter,

as unworthy the pursuits of a rational creature. The sensualist may foolishly boast his rioting in criminal delights, but sooner or later he will be thoroughly convinced, that in virtue only he can experience the participation of real and substantial pleasures. Therefore, from this maxim of two evils choose the least ; so of two pleasures, the greatest should have the preference.

The choice of good and evil lies before every man : if he does but search into himself, he cannot mistake that which is the most conducive to his happiness.

A good man and an angel ! these between
How thin the barrier ? what divides their fate ?
Perhaps a moment, or perhaps a year,
Or if an age it is a moment still,
A moment or eternities forgot.

We

We must not only injure no man, but we must do good to all according to our respective abilities. The moral of this duty lies in the difficulty of practising it; for it requires an absolute sacrifice of the most unruly passions, which ever rage in the human breast—*hatred* and *revenge*. It is not by conferring favours upon friends, or that man from whom you expect to receive them again, that you perform that duty; but by doing good to an enemy, and shewing yourself merciful to him, when you have it in your power to resent the injury he has done you.

“ Judge not, and ye shall not be
 “ judged : condemn not, and ye shall
 “ not be condemned : forgive, and ye
 “ shall be forgiven.”

To these precepts you must strictly adhere, to be a virtuous person and a true Christian. However aggravating the insults of your enemies, or great the troubles they have wickedly brought upon you, however just your anger, you must exert that mercy, which is the chief characteristic of a noble mind.

Revenge is the basest of all vices : attempts to ennoble it with the names of honour and magnanimity, prove only, that you are weak, cruel, or desirous of gilding over your depraved disposition. The true greatness of the soul consists in doing good to our enemies ; the more keen the offence, the more glorious it is to pardon it.

The greatest men of antiquity were so sensible of the excellency of this precept,

cept, that they obeyed it as scrupulously as if it had been taught them by our Divine Instructor. The more just they thought the revenge, so much the more noble did mercy appear in their eyes; they had but their innate virtue to incline them to forgive, when to that advantage we add the superiority of a mind enlightened by our holy religion. Can we say it is not in our power to be just, merciful, and to do good to our enemies? Men cannot be so ignorant of themselves, as to think it impossible to keep their passions under controul, and guard against their evil influence. Surely no such man can possibly exist: from crime to crime, from vice to vice, there is always an interval, and that interval is necessarily filled up by reflection. At those cool hours you are forcibly compelled to confess the abuse of your passions, and your
 ability.

ability of checking them : it is then, you are forcibly compelled to disapprove of your conduct, and to resolve upon a life more worthy of the GOD who gave it. Would you renounce what reason tells you to despise, esteem what reason tells you to value, you would soon attain to that perfection, which you would otherwise despair of obtaining, only that you may the more freely indulge in every vice and folly.

If you will not be deluded, and will have a clear view of your situation, as well as the design of your existence, that knowledge will lead you to the practice of your religious and social duties : then you shall be convinced, that passions were necessary for the trial of your virtue. A good conscience yields pleasures which cannot be equalled by

worldly enjoyments and sensual gratifications.

“ For the fruits of righteousness are
 “ peace ; and the effects of righteousness
 “ are quietness and assurance for
 “ ever.”

14 - 05 1903

Exodus 20-14

DISCOURSE III

Exod. xx. 14.

The seventh Commandment.

HOWEVER just this commandment, it is not always easy to obey it. There are times and circumstances, when the most fervent votaries of virtue, sink into the children of nature ; when reason vanishes before passion, and leaves the soul defenceless against the charms of pleasure. Those times and those circumstances are like, kingdoms whose inhabitants are too proud of their riches, not to be careless of morality. Marriages
founded

founded upon interest, convenience, or ambition, are not likely to inforce the love of our duties in our hearts : and the indifference of an husband, soon followed by contempt, is an affront few women can forgive. Vanity is a tyrant often more despotic than nature. Though we know it to be an enemy to our peace and happiness, so frail are we, that we seldom oppose its dictates with success. Its language carries persuasion with it : once convinced, we are like one delirious, insensible of what we do, insensible of the resolutions we may form.

The female heart is a temple, from which modesty cannot be forced away, without an extreme violence. Were it not for the repeated injustice of man, which gradually extinguishes the sense of their duty, women would be martyrs

tyrs to virtue, rather than the slaves of nature.

The behaviour of men is more diabolical, that they seem delighted with the barbarous pleasure of abusing the power, fancy and fortune have placed in their hands. To an offensive neglect, to an open libertinism, they will often add a brutality of manners, which the most passive cannot but resent. That patience, that humility, that insensibility of injuries which both reason and religion enjoin, are perfections not common in society. Those who are the most enlightened by the gospel, who make the nearest approaches to the true Christian morality, who by constantly practising its duties appear invincibly armed against the seductions of vice, have in their hearts

hearts the feed of every passion; and as nature is always awake, and virtue sometimes asleep, may in one unguarded moment become the sport of irregular desires.

What bad company is to young men, the insults of husbands are to their wives; a school of corruption and immorality. In vain are women taught to pride themselves on their reason and intellectual accomplishments, if the conduct of men betray a contempt of them. How can you expect they will esteem virtues you affect to despise? would you have women to be virtuous? be virtuous yourselves: force them to respect you, and they will deserve your utmost regard and attention.

Where there is mutual love, there will be a mutual desire to please; and
 .desire

desire will both beget and quicken endeavour. It will most certainly either prevent, or totally extinguish, every suspicious jealousy; dispose the party in the wrong to make suitable acknowledgments, and the other grateful requitals. When asunder it will inflame them with an ardency to shorten absence; when together, it will be a spring of lasting satisfaction; they will part with regret, and they will meet with joy.

When the heart is mutually interested, marriage becomes that sweet and intimate union, which alleviates and lessens every evil in life. It raises and improves every joy, and creates the reciprocal desire of making each other happy.

In this harmony of dispositions, marriage is so truly blissful and so paradisaical,

D

saical, that they hardly covet or desire to change it even for another. Without this tender intercourse, there is scarce any condition or fortune, that yields any solid content. An inquietude in time begets melancholy, and steals insensibly even upon the best tempers in a life of celibacy; which the endearing sweetness, and chearfulness peculiar to our sex, either banishes or prevents. Between man and man the closest friendship is seldom lasting, because their obligations and interests can never be the same. In wedlock, the ties of both centre in one; the knot becomes indissoluble, and of course so will be their friendship.

Very easy might that commandment be obeyed, would you attend to your duties as men and Christians. I will endeavour to do justice to my sex. Would
you

you not drive them into guilt, you husbands, by your inconstancy, you men, by flattering their vanity, innocence would for ever dwell in their hearts. Their wanderings from virtue are your work; it is you who cause those objects they behold to-day with rapture, to turn to-morrow odious or perfectly indifferent; who dispel every noble or religious sentiment from their breast, to leave in their room an indifference for public esteem, and a love for pleasure.

Libertinism is not the sole cause. The endless round of diversions feeds their natural fondness for dissipation, the sighs of criminal desires, and the looks of admiration. Surrounded by deceitful men, flatterers, and libertines, in the midst of every delusion capable of ensnaring their intoxicated imaginations,

how could they but bid adieu to discretion and virtue? Left under the guard of false and empty pleasures, it would be a wonder if they escaped the contagion of immorality. It is not by shielding themselves under the banners of vice, that they can even hope for a victory over their passions, and the art of their seducers.

The chief things, says the ingenious Dr. Foster, which enhance, and swell the guilt of a violation of conjugal fidelity in the female sex, are those which follow.

First, that the gracious Parent of the whole family of mankind (for both males and females are equally his offspring and the care of his indulgent providence) that he, I say, in the case of the woman,

man, has been pleased to implant, and temper with her very constitution, an ingenuous modesty, that is shocked at the thought of all indecent freedoms, and gross impurities; and particularly shy and fearful (more so here than in most other respects) of any attacks that may be made, either on her virgin chastity or conjugal honour. In consequence of her greater modesty, nature has also endued her with a more quick and lively sense of shame; and from this root it is, that she feels more bitter agonies of confusion and remorse, in the first prospect of being publicly exposed, than is generally found to spring either from the principle of honour, or the passion of shame, in men. Add to this, that these, as to their degree at least, peculiar ingredients in female natures, are assisted, strengthened, and guarded yet the more, by the

manner of their education ; which, when it is careful and prudent, is more close and reserved, and more restrained to all, even the lowest points of decency, than is for the most part, that of the other sex. So that, when she wilfully degenerates into the vile character of an adultress, she acts not only against the general dictates of nature, but against the more immediate principles and laws of her own constitution. She renders herself, to a very high degree, infamous, odious to all the virtuous and chaste of her own sex, pitied and despised by the other ; and in the eye of G O D having broken through all the restraints which he kindly provided to check lawless passion, and preserve her purity unfulled, she must doubtless appear with very foul stains upon her soul.

And

And it will be no wonder, as this is the point in which, for the reasons already mentioned, it was most unnatural in her to err, if afterwards she be found to deviate still farther and farther from the first implanted sentiments and peculiar impulses of her nature, and become in the end, utterly hardened against all sense of shame. Her native modesty was intended to be the chief ornament and loveliness (as it has, indeed, many irresistible charms and graces attending it) as well as ordained, for the defence of her sex's honour. This she must have both inwardly felt, and have been convinced of from common experience; and therefore, when by offering violence to nature, and setting all decency at defiance, she breaks through this most engaging and powerful tie, the guilt of her infi-

delity must be hereby greatly heightened, and rendered more black and unpardonable.

Another aggravation of the guilt of an adultress wife, differing in kind from those already suggested, but derived, as they are, from the particular temperament of the female sex, is this; that they are, while uncorrupted, apt to be sooner moved, and more shocked, at barbarities, at all gross acts of injustice and outrage. And having this singular restraint, besides the common principles of humanity, and sense of right, is it possible for them, without an uncommon naughtiness and pravity of heart, to be involved in a course of the most vile and detested injustice? of complicated injustice, injustice not only to single persons, but to whole families; by alienating

nating estates from their right heirs ; confounding property ; and by accidental discoveries, creating embarrassment in the titles to estates that have for a long time been peaceably, and without interruption possessed. As these last circumstances, by which the innocent must necessarily suffer, are likely to be oftener the consequence of the wife's than the husband's infidelity, they may justly be reckoned, another of its heinous and special aggravations.

Let me add farther, that the injury done by this particular offence, is perhaps beyond that of all others (the case of murder only excepted) irreparable : and that even the confession, and ingenuous acknowledgment of it, will frequently increase and aggravate the injury, as it will add to the inconsolable affliction,

affliction, and the piercing agonies of grief, which the kind and tender-hearted husband feels, by leaving him no possible room to doubt of his dishonour, nor consequently the least dawning of hope, to palliate and relieve his misery.

These last indeed are mischievous and dreadful circumstances, attending the crime of adultery universally, and ought to have the same weight to deter the husband from the commission of it, as the other contracting party in marriage, to whom they have been directly represented. And it is an undeniable branch of his duty likewise, if this capital instance of infidelity be an unpardonable act of guilt in the other sex, carefully to avoid every thing that may be an inducement or provocation to it; every thing that tends to create an aversion to his

his person, all ill usage that may gradually extinguish love and inspire deep and settled resentment. He should take care to maintain a strict watch over all his loose and wandering passions, that he may be a bright and unexceptionable example of pure uncorrupted fidelity. For if he violates his own solemn tie (though GOD may be righteously displeased, and will doubtless severely punish, and the world may justly censure the like instance of corruption in the wife) yet he himself, without being quite impudent in vice, in excesses of most unbridled and licentious vice, cannot think that he has any right to complain.

But let him guard with the whole collected force of his reason, against the sin and torment of causeless jealousy, ordained by the wise author of nature to be a perpetual punishment to itself; be-
cause

cause it is a seed fruitful of every thing mischievous, and of irreconcilable discord. A passion, weak, ungenerous, and unmanly in itself; the utmost dishonour and injury that can possibly be offered to an innocent and faithful wife; and which may prompt some of impetuous tempers, and not duly influenced by principles of virtue and religion, to meditate such wild schemes of revenge, as in all probability no other inordinate passion would have ever engaged them in. It is, therefore, a wise caution which is given by the son of Syrac in the book of Ecclesiasticus; “Be not jealous over
 “ the wife of thy bosom, and teach her
 “ not an evil lesson against herself.”

But let me remark here, before I conclude this head, that the passage just cited was only designed to intimate, what
 may

may be, in fact, the fatal consequence of groundless jealousy; but not in the least to vindicate, or excuse such extravagant and unnatural resentment in the wife, for any abuse or wrong which she may have unjustly suffered: for though another fails in his duty, mine is still inviolable. Much less can his doing me a trifling injury, justify my being hurried on, by an ungoverned transport, to the commission of a greater. Upon altogether as reasonable a ground, may defamation and slander provoke to fraud and robbery, or a violent assault upon my person, though without actual mischief, to premeditated murder itself; as jealousy can urge to adultery.

Men, foolish men, invent every day new means of disgracing human nature, and of making themselves miserable.

So

So eager are they in the pursuit of those objects which are a poison to their happiness, that one would think they are under the absolute sway of folly. Does not a dear-bought experience tell you, that disgust or remorse attends or follows pleasures, which reason and religion condemn? There is not one among you, however abandoned to prostitution, could deny so notorious a truth. Why then do you persist in an infatuation, you so well know to be obnoxious to true felicity! You have the remedy in your power, and yet refuse to administer it! Would you not think that wretch a mere madman, who, labouring under a painful disease, would prefer it to health? Where is the difference between that man and you?

In religion and virtue you will find the reality of that happiness, of which only you but enjoy the shadow. The vain-glorious man may say, he finds it in the servility of his sycophants; the coquette, in the praises of her admirers; the prude, in her reputation; the ambitious in the favours of his prince; the miser in the sight of his treasure; the man of gallantry, in the smiles of a beauty; the voluptuary in the luxuriancy of a banquet; how fallacious! In religion and virtue alone, real happiness can be obtained and enjoyed.

They forcibly command us to keep our passions in subjection, and practise the great virtues of piety, benevolence, and justice. In performing these necessary duties, we shall soon experience a serenity of mind, which vice and the follies

follies of life can never give : you will enjoy a satisfaction unallayed by remorse, and you will be enabled to bear every affliction with a chearful resignation. Then will you feel the transport of a conscious integrity, and be thoroughly sensible, that you are enjoying and pursuing the unerring path, which leads to everlasting happiness.

Can there be any happiness in things which neither elevate the mind, nor are useful to society ? which have no value but that given them by a depraved imagination ? Men, by wasting their precious time in dress, drink, cards, luxury, ambition, and the company of fools or knaves, cannot surely estimate their wisdom, and their gratitude, to their all-bountiful Creator. The duty required is, to act consistently with reason, to be

just,

just, temperate, charitable; and to give the world examples worthy imitation. Were these great duties duly encouraged and practised, we would not hear of unnatural parents.

The married would then experience, that, of all the pleasures which render human life, there are none more permanent than those which flow from the mutual return of conjugal affection. The immortal Milton, after he had described the nuptial bower of our first parents, thus calls upon that blissful state :

Hail wedded love! mysterious law! true source
Of human offspring, sole property
In paradise, of all things common else.

* * * * *

—Perpetual fountain of domestic bliss!
Here love his golden shafts employ; here lights
His constant lamp, and waves his purple wings.

E

Complain

Complain not of women ; their principal defects are borrowed from man. Should they prove vicious, it is because you are so. Should they be the reverse of yourselves, they would fail of pleasing you : tempt them not to infidelity, and they will never indulge the thought of it. Be rational, virtuous, and no longer adore their caprice ; nor invite them to crimes, by creating or applauding their folly.

Women sincerely esteem those who deserve their respect ; and they unwillingly submit to the necessity which you impose upon them, to be false, frivolous, and indiscreet. Men should speak less of the beauty and graces of their persons, and more of the advantages of an enlightened and well cultivated understanding. Let them not hear flattery
from

from your deceitful lips ; beware of entertaining their imagination with ideas which, upon reflection, may prove fatal to the purity of their morals ; keep from them those books which are the works of idleness and libertinism ; tell them the danger of a life of eternal dissipation, where love, music, dance, wine, and nature, unite to lull virtue asleep, and make them forgetful of themselves.

To precept add example ; and virtue will grace the steps and actions of women. Peace and union will reign in every family, and insure you a permanent happiness ; religion will have sincere votaries, and you will find no difficulty to obey the commandments of an all-righteous and all-merciful Creator. For it is religion alone which can secure us in the possession of that happy state. Religion will calm the mind, purify the heart,

regulate the desires, correct the perversity of will, give good dispositions, check evil ones, and finally subdue them. Religion will make us mild, humane, sober, and chaste, and commence a kind of heaven on earth; as well as a sure passage to everlasting bliss, in the heaven of heavens hereafter.

DISCOURSE IV.

Prov. 26. 5.

Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his conceit.

IT is an excellent advice : but where is the man, unless he be absolutely insensible to ambition, love, avarice, or the charms of a social life, who would answer a fool according to his folly? When I question the existence of such a man, I do not intend to impeach the wisdom of Solomon ; nor to infer, that no one delights in the charitable office of telling his friends or neighbours their

vices or imperfections: I mean only, that I do not know the man of that cast of mind and disposition requisite to execute it to the advantage of the fool he censures.

Passions in spite of reason have their days of sway: and it happens, I am sorry for it, that on those days, they implicitly submit to the feelings of their hearts, or to the wants of their fallacious imaginations. Every day evinces, that the best of men have about them a larger share than the fool himself. However short and uncommon their wanderings from virtue, honour, or the laws of decorum, they leave an impression, which the fool or the knave does never fail to turn to his own advantage. When you offer to their eyes the spectacle of the same errors, they necessarily persevere in
the

the habit of them, from that prevailing notion, that were they crimes, you would lead a more rational and virtuous life.

Examples, and not precepts, are the rules of a fool's life: you shall never convince him of the absurdity of his opinions, or of the impropriety of his behaviour, by declaiming against them: his incredulity indeed is the more obstinate, that he envies your superiority over him: and through the desire of not feeling it, concludes from one single error of your judgment, that you are in as much need as he of advice or reproof.

There is no man so foolish, who does not meet now-and-then with a still greater fool than himself; who is not sensible of and desirous of priding in it. If the gratification of that desire be ap-

plauded, I would not wonder should he, upon reflection, see in you the fool—in himself the wise man.

The reception vice and virtue, wisdom and folly, receive in the world, causes strange metamorphoses in the human mind. The coquette, whom the praises of men prevent from perceiving or renouncing her folly, does certainly value the character she assumes, above that of the virtuous woman, whose discretion, modesty, or attention to her duties, are oftener the subject of ridicule than commendation. The fop, conscious from the partiality of the women, that he needs no other merit than that of dress, complaisance, or singularity, must undoubtedly look with a supercilious eye of contempt upon the man who trusts to his talents,

talents, genius, or virtues, for distinction and respect.

The society we live in, is the creator of our tastes and manners, and the sole judge to which we submit. If that society, in which decency, good sense, and religion are disregarded, be the most considerable, either by numbers or the importance of its members, it naturally follows, that ignorance, foppery, and immorality, are the prevailing qualities in the character of people of rank and fashion. Will men, who belong to such a society, listen coolly to your advice, or profit by your instructions? What can the reproof of a wise man avail, against the applauses of a world of fools, who stand in support of each other, to countenance their mutual detestation of order, religion, and virtue?

When

When folly has taken root through flattery or habit, like a disease grown too inveterate for the skill of a physician, it braves all the powers of an orator. How many do we not see, even in their old age, aping the manners of youth; making themselves contemptible through choice, and seeking to revive their dying folly, by encouraging passions they can no longer gratify? They live in the past, lest the thought of the future should mark their last moments with shame, sorrow, and despair.

Fools owe their existence to a bad education, and the criminal indifference of their instructors; who are more attentive to grace their persons with superficial accomplishments, than to fortify their reason with the knowledge of the virtues they ought to possess, to perform

form with dignity the duties of their situation in life.

No man is born with such a defect in his mind, as not to be able to correct the imperfections of nature, with the help of a proper education. With labour and patience we can give to children the form for which they seemed not to be created : and at that early period of life, instructions are the more profitable, that no passion opposes their progress. By a discreet exertion of the teacher's power, he can change into a love for virtue, their natural propensity to vice, and point out the great advantages in the practice of religion and virtue. Were they brought up in the contempt of a life of dissipation, they would, when passions begin to spring forth in their hearts, be upon their guard, and find

in useful studies a remedy against them. Habituated to think and to compare, they would easily discern between truth and error, and determine always in favour of the former. The reverse of such an education is a school, where folly presides, dictates, and prepares for the world a species of men and women, who are, through principle and inclination, the satire of the laws, and a disgrace to humanity.

The importance of a religious education, is well worth our utmost care and steady attention ; for (says Doctor Foster) if the foundation be, here, rightly laid, we provide, in the surest manner, for our children's future honour, and their happiness throughout the whole period of their existence ; not for a low, fleeting animal, but for a reasonable, moral, immortal

mortal life. We take the only method to render all their other accomplishments of learning, extensive knowledge, polite address, engaging manners, in the highest degree graceful and beneficial, to refine their disposition, ennoble their views, fit them for offices of society and friendship, and urge them from the sublimest of all motives, and motives of the most certain and constant efficacy, to laudable and great pursuits.

In a word, so far as the best principles, and the utmost precaution of human prudence can avail, we guard those tender branches of the family (whom the God of nature, the universal parent, has especially committed to tutorage while they are credulous and unexperienced) against the dangerous snares of life ; and those excesses of vice and false pleasures,

2

which

which impair the health, and corrupt the manners of youth, often to such a degree, that they are never afterwards recovered to a due strength and vigour, either of body or mind; and thus the rational workmanship of God is rendered in a manner abortive, and stifled in its very birth. It is prevented, not by any direct fault of its own, but before it becomes capable of distinguishing rightly between good and evil; it is prevented merely through its misfortune in having been intrusted to the conduct of unnatural and faithless guardians, from so much as aspiring after any improvement in virtue and religion, and from ever thinking in earnest how it may best attain the end of its creation.

How the advice of Solomon could be productive of any good to those
species

species of beings, who confide in their own prudence for the choice of their manners and the conduct of their life, is not easily conceived; for when the fear of infamy is not even a check to their libertinism or immorality, does it not appear incontestibly evident, that they are lost to the feeling of shame or reproof?

Who are those you censure? Are they not those only from whom you expect neither services nor favours? How do you behave before the fools who have it in their power to confer favours or injure your interest? Do you not prostitute to please them your honour and probity? This difference, however artfully conceived, is self-evident in the contrast you adopt, the fool finds his justification; and, perhaps, thinks

thinks you have one vice more than he has—Hypocrisy.

To answer a fool according to his folly, it is necessary to reclaim the abuses of our mode of education; and that merit and virtue should have to the favour of the great, the claim usurped by vice and ignorance. Till then, the best advice, it is to be feared, will be but unmeaning words, which will leave every man in the peaceful enjoyment of his folly, and of the privilege of thinking himself wise in his own conceit.

However, it is the duty of all men to assist one another in the exercise of the virtues beneficial to society. An excellent good may arise from hence: though we should not compleat a perfect cure, we may stop the progress of the disorder.

disorder. When men or women begin to open their hearts to shame, and to fear the lash of censure, there is an hope to be entertained of their recovery; if that instant be duly attended to, it will infallibly turn to the advantage of reason, virtue, and piety. Then may you convince them that the heart which is replete with the latter, cannot fail of tasting and enjoying the sublimest pleasures.

Each branch of piety delight inspires;
 Faith builds a bridge from this world to the
 next,
 O'er death's dark gulph, and all its horrors hides;
 Praise, the sweet exhalation of our joy,
 That joy exalts, and makes it sweeter still;
 Prayer ardent opens heaven, lets down a stream
 Of glory on the consecrated hour
 Of man, in audience with the Deity.

F

Thus

Thus delightfully employed, the mind may dwell upon the present, look back upon the past, or stretch forward into futurity with complacency and delight: such a disposition of the mind is the only sure basis on which the fabric of true and substantial pleasures can possibly be built.

The love of mankind is another source of our happiness: actuated by this, we derive the sole power of indulging our humanity and benevolence. For though there be but few, whose ability extends to universal beneficence, yet a spirit of universal humanity and benevolence may be possessed by all mankind. To which we may add, that the contemplation of the universe, the charms of society, the tender delights of reciprocal affection, with the rational pleasures

tures of our holy religion, are open to all men. These are the general sources from which spring our lasting happiness, both here and hereafter. Yet alas! what numbers, thoughtless, thankless, and inconsistent, fly to opposite pursuits; and seek pleasure in every channel but the true one! They are so bewildered in the labyrinths of folly and dissipation, that they want an heart for devotion, humanity, friendship, or love; they are too great strangers to what is beautiful, to enjoy the sublime felicity resulting from an uniform practice of morality and religion.

The practice of virtue is so truly amiable, that I wonder it does not animate the heart of every one to generous actions, and to tread the paths of rectitude and honour. For such a delight attends the performance

of our duties, that it must annihilate in the individual, who enjoys it, all the seeds of immorality and irreligion. The juvenile gaieties of such are cautiously indulged, he steadily pursues those innocent pleasures which can never receive satiety, and of which he can never be deprived. He sinks into the vale of years with his thoughts chastised and refined; he then feels an internal composure, and a tranquillity which the world cannot give. Happy in himself, and beloved by all who know him, on he walks, to the verge of the grave, without remorse or trepidation: and when death commands him to plunge into it, obeys without a murmur; exulting in the consciousness of a well-spent life, which entitles him to the promised joys of heaven.

Now see the man immortal: him I mean,
 Who lives as such: whose heart full bent on
 heaven,

Leans

Leans all that way, his bias to the stars:
The world's dark shades in contrast set
shall raise

His lustre more; tho' bright without a foil:
Observe his awful PORTRAIT, and admire;
Nor stop at wonder, IMITATE and LIVE.

With aspect mild, and elevated eye,
Behold him seated on a mount serene,
Above the fogs of sense, and passion's storm;
All the black cares and tumults of this life,
Like harmless thunders, breaking at his feet,
Excite his pity, not impair his peace.
Earth's genuine sons, the sceptred, and the slave,
A mingled mob, a wandering herd, he sees,
Bewildered in the vale; in all unlike!
His full reverse in all! What higher praise?
What stronger demonstration of the right?
The present all their care; the future, his.
When public welfare calls, or private want,
They give to fame; his bounty he conceals.
Their virtues varnish nature, his exalt.
Mankind's esteem they court; and he, his own.
Theirs, the wild chace of false felicities;

His, the compos'd possession of the true.
 Alike throughout is his consistent piece,
 All of one colour, and an even thread;
 While party-coloured shreds of happiness,
 With hideous gaps between, patch up for them
 A madman's robe; each puff of fortune blows
 The tatters by, and shews their nakedness.

He sees with other eyes than theirs: where they
 Behold a sun, he spies a Deity;
 What makes them only smile, makes him adore.
 Where they see mountains, he but atoms sees;
 An empire, in his balance, weighs a grain.
 They things terrestrial worship, as divine;
 His hopes immortal blow them by as dust,
 That dims his sight, and shortens his survey,
 Which longs in infinite to lose all bound.
 Titles and honours (if they prove his fate)
 He lays aside to find his dignity;
 No dignity they find in ought besides.
 They triumph in externals (which conceal
 Man's real dignity) proud of an eclipse.
 Himself too much he prizes to be proud,
 And nothing thinks so great in man, as man.

Too

Too dear he holds his int'rest to neglect
 Another's welfare, or his right invade;
 Their int'rest, like a lion, lives on prey.
 They kindle at the shadow of a wrong;
 Wrong he sustains with temper, looks on heaven,
 Nor stoops to think his injurer his foe;
 Nought but what wounds his virtue, wounds
 his peace.

A covered heart their character defends;
 A covered heart denies him half his praise.
 With nakedness his innocence agrees;
 While their broad foliage testifies their fall.
 Their no-joys end, where his full feast begins;
 His joys create, theirs murder future bliss.
 To triumph in existence, his alone;
 And his alone triumphantly to think
 His true existence is not yet begun.
 His glorious course was yesterday complete;
 Death, then, was welcome; yet life still is
 sweet.

DISCOURSE V.

Prov. 27. 5.

Open rebuke is better than secret
love.

WHEN men will not hear,
but to be pleased, what pre-
cepts will not appear absurd?
what truths will not dwindle into un-
meaning words? An attempt to per-
suade people, who will not be persuaded,
is a task, which, however ungrateful, is
the duty of every moral writer to under-
take: though the applause they obtain
is by no means a compensation for the
time they lose. I do not infer from this,
that

that every ear is open to flattery, that every heart is open to vice ; God forbid. I should then think myself surrounded by men and women destitute of all noble feelings, or dead to all sense of shame. I have no such bad opinion of their morals or understanding ; but it is so probable, that the majority are vain, thoughtless, or unwilling to distinguish between truth and error, that it requires no little faith in the precept of Solomon, to dare to repeat after him, “ open rebuke is better than secret love.” From the throne to the cottage, all would live in their own way, if possible : but that must not be ; for society would no longer exist, should neither religion, nor the law, nor the fear of contempt, be a check to the senseless desires of the individuals that compose it.

Various

Various are the methods employed to instil into our minds the necessity of acting agreeably to the dictates of reason and virtue; but in general, they have the effect of lenitives, which allay the pain, without curing the wound. Hypocrisy is productive of no real good; for be a dissembler ever so attentive to secrete his thoughts or actions, his passions lay him perpetually open to detection: should nature but once triumph over his political conduct, the discovery of his sentiments becomes noxious to morality. Hypocrisy is to virtue, what a pretension to wit is to wit itself; an homage to qualities we know to be truly excellent, and which we cannot obtain, through the want of reflection, and the depravity of our taste. Would you but a few minutes meditate upon the charms of a virtuous life, the folly of your pursuits, and the
 vanity

vanity of human praise, you would all unite in thinking with Solomon, that “open rebuke is better than secret love.”

Reason is the only sure pilot of human life: it steers us with safety through a tempestuous world, surrounded with innumerable rocks and quicksands of ignorance, folly, and vice. It arms the mind with magnanimity, and teaches the art of extracting life and health, virtue and knowledge, joy and peace, out of the chaos and mutability of human affairs. This is the only state for real enjoyment; for our certain success and security, and our repose and tranquillity. In a word, this is the pilot that will conduct us to the port of everlasting happiness.

Believe, and shew the REASON of a man;
Believe, and taste the pleasure of a God;
Believe, and look with triumph on the tomb.

He

He who besets your ears with flattery, is a villain, who sacrifices your reputation in this world, and your happiness in the next, to his own interest; yet that man you trust: on that man only you confer benefits, whilst the worthy man who talks to your reason, and not to your passions, is the object of your displeasure or hatred. No one will be told of his foibles or imperfections; what language! is there then no man of honour, no virtuous woman upon earth? I neither can nor will believe it. We are not born corrupted, our hearts are never shut to justice, the respect of ourselves, and the love of order; our minds are never shut to persuasion: however intoxicating the pleasure of being admired, of having a world of slaves ready to applaud what we say, ready to execute what we command, we are now and then,

spite

spite of ourselves, conscious we behave wrong; conscious we are a prey to folly, and the victims of our credulity. If at at these hours, when reason resumes her power over us, a friend undertook the cause of virtue and modesty, what men or women would be so obstinate in guilt, or in the contempt of public esteem, as not to walk in the path prescribed them by decency, morality, and religion.

There are no passions, no whims, no caprices, proof against reason. There are no men, no women, who do not often in their hearts confess, that virtue is the sole road to happiness; who do not repent of their attachment to objects unworthy of their affections; who do not wish sincerely to have it in their power, to devote themselves to the practice of their duty as Christians, and members
of

of society. Were not happy dispositions destroyed, almost at the instant they are formed, by the interposition of secret love or of a false friend, glorious would be the age we live in, through the authority religion and virtue would have over us. Were a woman openly told, that modesty condemns her behaviour, she would leave off her coquetry, and be more ambitious of deserving the respect, than the admiration of men. The man of fortune would make use of his riches, more to his honour and the advantage of the public, were he forcibly convinced, that the favours he bestows, are so many arms he give his enemies against him, to impeach his virtue or understanding. A coxcomb would not prostitute the dignity of a man, should an open rebuke dispel the mist secret love has placed before his eyes. We all want

that open rebuke: how else can we silence the sensations of vanity, always upon the wing to invent new arguments against self-denial? A whispered advice is readily forgotten, nay often serves to increase the passions it was intended to destroy. Such a refinement of delicacy betrays a diffidence self-love never fails to interpret in its favour: it does not become a real friend; he ought to speak the truth; to speak it boldly, that he may not leave behind him a motive for a doubt.

Innumerable are the evils we bring upon ourselves by borrowing from our passions or our flatterers our opinion of vice and virtue: from hence spring the errors in our judgment and conduct. Would you give to reflection the time you waste at your toilet, or in visits, or
in

in hearing your praises from those, who have an interest in making you contemptible; you would soon be made sensible, that in virtue and religion only, you can find a happiness unmixed with sorrow. Weariness and remorse attend constantly upon those pleasures reason cannot justify. Like a man afflicted with the gout, who calls to his help quacks and physicians, and tries every remedy, you apply in vain to variety against the restlessness of your mind. Worldly occupations or amusements leave always in the heart a vacuity, the feeling of which is often a more exquisite torment than all the agonies of a painful death. *Ye men! ye women! awake to the sense of your duty. Remember, that this life leads to an eternity of bliss or misery: that the very instant you breathe may be your last: that you owe to the*

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God

God who created you an account of the gifts he has lavished upon you ! that those who have abused them shall find no mercy ! that the more he ennobled you, the greater means he gave you to do good : the more severe your punishment will be ! Whilst it is yet time, beware of turning his favours into curses : listen not to secret love ; it talks but to deceive. However mortifying the language of a friend, scorn him not from your sight ; but with a grateful ear welcome his open rebuke.

Malignity may put on the mask of friendship : what then ? Would any one of us like to fall into a pit rather than be indebted for his life to a vicious man ? It is the justice of the censure, not the character of the censurer, we are to value : it matters not, whether he be friend or enemy, so long as we are conscious of
the

the defects he reproves in us. Who would not find an excuse for his foibles, were he allowed not to think himself guilty, but upon the word of a disinterested friend? It is envy that has drawn my picture: is that a reason to continue in my error? I am afraid those who argue in this manner, are through choice enemies to virtue.

There is no dogma so sacred, no doctrine so pure, no religion so well established, that would not forfeit its just claims to our respect, were we to judge of it from the manners of those who profess them: but would not that man be deemed a fool, an abandoned wretch, who should conclude that adultery is not a sin, because a profligate only has disclaimed against it.

As the ingratitude of men ought not to steel our hearts against the feelings of humanity, the displeasure of those we advise ought not to check our inclination to restore them to virtue. Force your will upon a child, he will grow stupid or ill-natured; oppose his fancies with art and discretion, he will be flexible as wax, which you can modify at pleasure. Treat thus the men and women whose unhappy dispositions you are desirous to correct: by this means you will work a wonderful change in their minds. An indirect satire against the foibles their hearts are tainted with, has often reclaimed men and women from a life of dissipation and folly: it is a lesson the more effective, as you leave to them the honour of their own reformation. A woman forgives the glass that tells her she is not handsome; would she forgive the

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the man that would venture the same compliment? I doubt it. Her case is that of the ambitious, the miser, and the debauchee. I say it again, secure their vanity in your interest, and you may give their passions the turn you like best.

However amiable virtue is, she ought to appear under a lovely form, or the impression she makes, will, I fear, but glance upon our hearts. The indiscreet severity of the moralists adds to the depravity of the human mind; it irritates more than it convinces: a prudent man waits for the happy hour when he can be heard to the advantage of the cause he supports; at that hour only, open rebuke can meet with success, and prove better than secret love.

Solomon knew mankind too well to think, that passions would vanish before rebuke made openly in the face of the world; or that a sensible man would ever interpret his meaning into an advice to defame. By open rebuke, he understood a private remonstrance made by a friend, or the ministers of religion, to the person they intend to screen against the dangers of the passions, and convert to morality. He did not encourage the savage brutality of the slanderer, nor authorize the false virtue of the hypocrite, to feast openly upon the imperfections of men, over whom he has no other superiority than the art of concealing his vices.

Instructions are not seasonable at all times: there are circumstances when they are not only absolutely useless, but
extremely

extremely dangerous by the effects they cause. Those times and those circumstances I need not point out: no man ever so little conversant in the knowledge of the world can mistake them.

Would parents attend to the education of their children, and bring them up in the practice of religious and social duties, they would arm them invincibly against the tyranny of the passions; but their guilty indifference leaving them defenceless, they surrender as soon as they are attacked, and are at last a disgrace and scandal to that religion and society, of which they ought to be the honour and glory. How can the youth of either sex, at liberty to range through the hemispheres of dissipation and folly, keep within the limits of honour and decency? What can stop their flight in the

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flowery regions of pleasure, when religion and virtue have no power over them? Will they believe the friend who, taught by experience, warns them of the danger they run? Of what avail could open rebuke be to their happiness, when education has perverted their natural good sense, and made them incapable of distinguishing between right and wrong? Unhappy youths! much more unhappy parents! who one day shall have to answer for your criminal neglect.

Let honour dictate all the words of your lips; let religion alone have the charge of your heart: unless you be superior to all the temptations of luxury and intemperance, and seek in virtue for the rule of your conduct, you will experience misery both here and hereafter.

DISCOURSE VI.

Mark 10. 15.

Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein.

WERE it not for this decisive sentence, from which there can be no appeal, we might have foolishly brought the holy religion we profess to the bar of reason, and have mistaken the errors of our judgments for the dictates of wisdom.

Many are the men, who, swayed by false pride, would challenge the divinity
of

of our Saviour's religion, had he not expressly declared, " that whosoever shall " not receive the kingdom of God as " a little child, shall in no wise enter " therein." By this means, Christ put it out of the power of our passions to delude our understanding, which however excellent a guide in our worldly concerns, is, upon religious subjects, liable to perpetual mistakes. It does not become us to arraign the ways of God, because we do not understand them: whatever he does and commands is just, and ought to be obeyed. Believe, and adore: in these two precepts consists the duty of a Christian; who perfectly convinced that God cannot deceive him, does not suffer his reason to be the judge of what he is to adopt for truth,—of what he is to reject as error.

That

That we believe what we ought not to believe, is the common complaint of the fool, the knave, and the philosopher; but the sensible and virtuous man, who does not center his happiness in the idle vanity of passing for a wit, or in the liberty of gratifying his passions, or in the honour of being at the head of the profligate of his age, trusts to the word of God, and not to his reason, for his faith, and the rule of his conduct.

Human prudence favours so much of folly, that I am amazed there are men who rely upon it in their pursuits of a happy life; how can they attain it, when they do not know in what it consists? when they choose to be misled, and continue their days in folly and ignorance? What head does not worldly felicity make giddy, and incapable of reflection?

By

By following the cry of the vain and thoughtless, you must not expect to find that tranquillity of mind, which religion alone can procure. *For religion opens a glorious prospect of a future state; she elevates the mind, informs the judgment, and corrects the impetuosity of our affections. She points out the proper objects which forcibly call forth all our love, joy, and admiration; and in contemplating these, we tread the paths of virtue with complacency and delight. What unison is there between virtue and religion! how natural the ascent from earthly bliss, to that of a glorious eternity!*

RELIGION! thou the soul of happiness;
 My theme! my inspiration! and my crown!
 My strength in age! my rise in low estate!
 My soul's ambition, pleasure, wealth!—my
 world!

My light in darkness! and my life in death!

My

My boast thro' time ! blifs thro' eternity !
 Eternity, too short to ſpeak thy praiſe !
 Or fathom thy profound of love to man !

The true felicity of life is to under-
 ſtand and praſtiſe our duties towards
 God and man. The great bleſſings of
 mankind are within us, and within our
 reach : they are ſuch, that neither the
 ſmiles nor the frowns of fortune can de-
 prive us of them. A religious life is
 the ſtate of human perfection ; it raiſes
 us as high as we can go, and makes
 every man his own ſupporter : he who
 perfeveres in it, enjoys a perpetual calm :
 in all places, at all times, in all con-
 ditions, he lives content and happy.
 The joy of a religious man is unmixed
 with pain ; other delights may ſmooth
 the brow, but do not affect the heart.
 Could you look death in the face and
 bid

bid it welcome, open your door to poverty and bridle your appetites, you would confess, that the pleasures founded upon worldly advantages are temporary and vain; that they are followed by grief and repentance; and that the only bliss, without end or satiety, is to be found in a peaceful conscience, and a compliance with the dictates of religion.

Know what you ought to do; and conform your will to that knowledge. Form not your judgment of things from the vulgar opinion of them, but from their real value. Laughter is not always a token of chearfulness: pleasure may animate every feature, and yet the breast be a prey to the most exquisite sorrow. The language of the free-thinker is ostentatious and not true: he wantonly teaches what in his own heart he knows

[III]

to be false, and destructive to your happiness.

Without the works of piety you cannot be happy : every hour you feel the want of it : by it you are taught all the duties of life ; faith to your friends ; charity to the miserable : it gives you peace by setting you above fear ; and riches by making you satisfied with what you possess. For

With PIETY begins all good on earth ;
'Tis the first born of rationality.

* * * * *

On Piety humanity is built ;
And on humanity, much happiness ;
And yet still more, on Piety itself.
A soul in converse with her GOD in heav'n.

Lend not your ear to self-love : its language is a poison productive of every evil. Should you esteem your person above your character, the praises of the
flatterer

flatterer above the approbation of your own heart, the thought of pleasure above meditations on virtue, you would soon forfeit the dignity of your nature, and lead a life of intolerable misery.

The slaves of vanity and ambition have not one day they can call their own; no pleasing sensation, which like the rose, is not attended with thorns; not one thought which is not a reproof to their actions. Ask the courtier, the man of gallantry, the coquette, the idle, and the voluptuary, if at those hours when reason usurps the dominion over the passions, they are not sensible of the folly of their pursuits; and that it is unworthy of a rational creature to place his felicity in any other objects than religion and virtue.

It

It is a melancholy consideration, that the most precious gifts of nature should be stifled or obscured by a shameful neglect; or that we should cultivate them only to make ourselves miserable. Born with the faculty of discerning good from evil, of choosing and rejecting, why do you despise that good whose value is always greater than the labour by which it is acquired? The study of religion is as pleasing as it is instructive: once familiarized to it, you would become strangers to that mortal langour, weariness, or disgust which accompanies you whatever you do, and wherever you go; from it you would derive an invincible strength against the attacks of the passions, and learn, that our days can be made happy only by virtue, and the practice of our duties.

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Where

Where the mind is taken up with the sublime truths of religion, there is no place for grief, anxiety, or superfluous vexations: a religious man is happy within himself, and independent upon fortune. To every duty Providence has annexed a blessing; a blessing which fills our hearts with an heavenly delight: who has done good, and has not found the reward of it in his conscience?

There is no temptation which reason cannot subdue; nor any passion for which religion has not provided a remedy. Religion is the art of life: its power is incredible: it infuses in the heart of the most timorous man a courage the greatest philosophers are not always favoured with: it makes us bear adversity with a divine temper, and value ourselves upon virtuous actions, not opinion. In poverty it gives

us an indifference for riches ; in affluence the desire of relieving the unfortunate.

The mind of a religious man has a dignity not to be thought of without love and reverence ! there is so wonderful a majesty in it, that even the worst of men are compelled to pay it homage, and to wish for the possession of it. Who has not a veneration for virtue ? who does not respect it, though he does not practise it ? no man ever gloried openly in his wickedness : all hate the imputation of it, and cover their villainy with a pretext of justice. Nature made you virtuous ; at the time you violate the laws of decorum or of morality, you know that you act wrong ; you fall willingly down the precipice you could avoid : whence this inconsistency, but from your suffering your

affections to take the lead of your reason?

Nature gave you life, but religion teaches you to live well; and this is a benefit greater than life itself. It is not, I confess, an easy task, to acquire wisdom and virtue sufficient to enable us to rise superior to the vices of the age, and the seductions of pleasure; but would you take counsel, and not imitate the fool who hates reproof, you would quickly know your duty to GOD, to your country, to your friends, to the poor, and delight in the performance of it. Virtue is open to all: no situation whatever can excuse a man from the exercise of it.

The more exalted you are in this life, the more conspicuously honest and religious

religious you ought to be. Your virtues are a mirrour held up to the vices of your inferiors. Glory in a pure mind, in a chaste conversation, in a decent behaviour, and you will awaken in every breast, a love for continence, moderation, and virtue.

It is to no purpose to place a high esteem upon temperance, justice, the contempt of riches, and the sacrifice of our passions, if we do not know what virtue is : from religion only we can obtain that knowledge. Human reason is often too frivolous or too bold ; it leaves a man distracted between hope and fear, when he ought to resolve and to act : unless we know the principles of our conduct, we cannot be constant in the practice of our duties ; for if it is by chance or caprice, that we do good or behave our-

selves well; we may by another chance or caprice obey the dictates of error and folly.

Men ought to know why they do this or that, as well as what they are to do. Religion in this respect is the sole infallible monitor we have; it teaches us to do, as well as to talk; and to make our words and actions agree with each other. Its precepts should be our daily meditation, and the only rules of our life. By giving us the possession of ourselves, they take from chance and caprice their power over us; remove all doubts and fears by a lively Faith.

FAITH speaks aloud, distinct; ev'n
 adders hear,
 But turn, and dart into the dark again.
 Faith

Faith builds a bridge across the gulph of
death,

To break the shock blind nature cannot shun,
And lands thought smoothly on the farther
shore.

Death's terror is the mountain Faith removes ;
That mountain barrier between man and peace.
This Faith disarms destruction ; and absolves
From ev'ry clam'rous charge, the guiltless
tomb.

DISCOURSE VII.

Eccles. 7. 23.

I said I will be wise, but it was far
from me.

WHERE is the man who can
vie with Solomon in know-
ledge, experience, and dis-
cretion? yet how many do not only say,
I will be wise, but are convinced they
are really so? Were their error profit-
able to their country, friends, or family,
in favour of its happy effects, I would
be tempted to place it in the rank of
virtues; but as it is an idle vanity, the
dream of a corrupted self-love, destruc-
tive to morality and their happiness, it is
my

my duty to tell them that their wisdom is folly.

Whoever says, I am wise, is either a rich fool, who takes the language of flattery for that of truth; or an hypocrite who wants to lay your credulity under contribution.

He is the wisest man who is subject to fewer vices, errors, or follies than his neighbours: to no higher degree of perfection can we arise. In vain do moralists insist, that we have it not in our power to triumph over human frailties: I do not commend their zeal, as its indiscretion may prevent the progress of virtue. Never attempt to persuade men that they can be perfectly wise; still less, that they ought to be so, if they will have a place in the kingdom of GOD.

The

The despair of being happy after death may annihilate the sense of their duties, and bring them imperceptibly to an indifference, if not contempt of religion.

All pleasures are no more crimes, than all self-denials are virtues. The neglect of a duty is not always a violation of it: religion and humanity command me to be benevolent and charitable.

It is more by the good he does to society, than by the purity of his morals, that a man is deemed wise and virtuous. The qualities which make a saint are very different from those which make a good citizen: they are seldom so beneficial to the world as that vanity which delights in acts of justice and generosity.

*A virtuous man will restore union in a
disunited family; relieve the distressed,
delight*

delight in his power of doing good, and diffuse happiness around him: it is he, and he alone, we ought to imitate and respect.

That woman has no claim to wisdom, who, though a sincere devotee to virtue, affects an air of libertinism in her manners. Unless her looks, dress, and conversation agree perfectly with the love of her duty, her virtue is of no advantage to the public, who too often judging of our morals from our appearance, conclude that we are what we seem to be. I say it without the fear of reproof; the libertine, who in her actions, speech, and countenance supports the cause of virtue, has a more lawful title to the esteem of the world, than the chaste woman, who betrays it by her levity and thoughtlessness.

The

The practice of virtue is only the performance of our duties: would you accept no benefits but what should be conferred through the love of virtue itself, Emulation I fear would die in every heart, and man sink into a brute.

It is not enough for a virtuous man to do no ill ; he must do good, be just, and live as in the article of death he would wish he had lived. Were it easy to act always agreeably to those maxims, Solomon would have met with success in the noble attempt he made of being wise.

So many pleasures we have to oppose and to conquer, before we can obey the dictates of reason, that the ministers of the holy religion we profess, ought to employ the most gentle methods to reclaim a man from his errors, and persuade him into the service of virtue.

A good

A good citizen always will be a tender parent, a faithful friend, and a generous protector to the unfortunate: in the qualities which form that character, are comprehended every virtue prescribed by GOD and nature for his happiness, and that of society: ask but what he can give, command but what he can execute. Beware especially of making the love of his duty a mystery; for if he be not at liberty to choose between vice and virtue, he may think the latter as fantastical, as the means used to force his faith in it are irrational and odious.

The actions of men spring from their passions; those passions it should be the care of legislature to direct, improve, or correct. Let us not deceive ourselves: the honour of being thought virtuous is oftener the cause of a generous action than

than virtue. The self-applause of our own heart we do not always value so much as the esteem of the public. Feed the love of glory in every breast, and you will have a race of men the most perfect that ever existed. Would princes institute rewards for virtue, instead of inventing punishments for crimes, they would reign over men; and not over a world of ignorant, profligate, and contemptible slaves.

I have described man such as he ought to be, in order to have a right to the homage the world is always inclined to pay those, whose qualities or virtues were beneficial to them: whoever tells you that human nature can ascend still higher, is an impostor.

Men are no more formed for a life of sublime speculation, than for a life of pleasure.

pleasure. God has not given us faculties, passions, and feelings, to be thrown away upon chimeras or upon amusements which leave behind them satiety and disgust.

There are duties peculiar to every situation; properly attended to, they would insure our happiness, and contribute to that of others. To indolence, and the foolish love of frivolous joys, we may attribute that uneasiness which clouds our minds with discontent, and sometimes with the hatred of life. Unless we be industrious to blend business with pleasure, the serious purposes of our existence with dissipation, we must necessarily deviate from the path of felicity and glory, and lead a life as uncomfortable to ourselves, as unimportant to society.

Let

Let us attend to the wants of our mind, and not force upon it a variety of objects it disdains to be entertained with. When its faculties are exercised as they ought to be, they enlighten our understanding, warm our hearts with every virtue, and free us from the painful sensations annexed to indulgence and luxury. The enjoyments of a benevolent heart, animated by a sense of religion, are unspeakably delightful; these alone it becomes us to wish for, and to endeavour to obtain: all other pleasures are insipid and vain, as the imagination that creates them.

“ I said I will be wise, but it was far
“ from me.”

Solomon did not intend to discourage men in the pursuit of wisdom; but to

I

arm

arm them against pride always open to deception. Were not the suggestions of self-love counteracted by modesty and diffidence, we should perpetually be dupes to the art of the flatterer, or the dictates of our passions.

Most men judge of themselves more from the opinion you seem to have of them, than from the real knowlege of their own worth: From hence spring such numbers of pretended wise men and women, who, at the bar of impartial reason, would wish to sink the class of fools.

Know thyself. It is not always an easy matter. Men born in affluence have seldom a friend candid, honest, or sensible enough to tell them their defects: it is only in the school of adversity, that they

they can acquire a true estimate of their character. Tell the man who betrays in every action an invincible ignorance of the means of being happy, who mistakes evil for good, and longs only for those things that are obnoxious to his health, reputation, or peace of mind, who does not hesitate to violate his duties towards God or man, when ambition or love demands the sacrifice of them ; tell that man that his conduct is inconsistent with reason, he will not understand you ; tell that woman so studious of her dress, who courts the smiles of the man she despises, who modifies her soul to the language of her admirers, that the time she spends at her toilet, and in the company of coxcombs, would be better employed in reading, reflecting, and adorning her mind ; you will see in her contemptuous smile, that she does not be-

lieve you. Their manner of life is not a fault of their natural disposition, but the inevitable consequence of your behaviour to them. They are much more respectable than you are : for had you not intended to profit by their indiscretion, you would not have cherished their folly, nor by a feigned respect, induced them to think themselves wise.

The wanderings of the imagination are soon followed by those of the heart, when you grant to caprice or levity the the tribute of praise you ought to pay to merit ; when you encourage by your approbation the contempt of virtue, do you not tempt men and women to overlook their religious and social duties, and invite them to degrade themselves ?

The

The flatterer is as great an enemy to virtue, as the indiscreet moralist : though their ends be absolutely different, they produce the same effects ; religion suffers equally by the villainy of the former, and the imprudent zeal of the latter.

Women born for loving you, will always adopt the form you like the best : if you be men of sense, they will be rational beings ; their morals are as much in your power, as yours are in that of the legislation ; and from the child of error and fancy, you will easily rise to the dignity of man, by delighting in the performance of those duties which are absolutely necessary as moral men and Christians.

A Deity believed, is joy begun ;
 A Deity adored, is joy advanced ;
 A Deity beloved, is joy matured.

DISCOURSE VIII.

Luke 3. 11.

He that hath two coats, let him
 impart to him that hath none;
 and he that hath meat, let him
 do likewise, LUKE iii, 11,

WHOEVER loves God, and be-
 lieves in the religion of Jesus
 Christ, will look upon his
 fellow-creatures as if they were his bro-
 thers, and rejoice in their prosperity;
 comfort them in their afflictions; and
 assist them in their distress.

How can you love God, and yet be insensible to the cries of the unfortunate? to the misery of the poor? to the deplorable situation of the orphan? It is not enough to believe there is a God: shew your faith by your works; for unless you obey what he commands, your religion is vain: for faith alone will not save you. Turn not to your condemnation, the goods God has been pleased to bestow upon you: they have not been given you to spend your days in revels and luxury, but to relieve those who are in need of your compassion and charity. Like passions they are a trial to our virtue, and in the difficulty of not abusing them consists the merit of making a good use of them. Happy the man who has it in his power to do good, and delights in it; who does not, like the rich man

man who fared sumptuously every day, centre his felicity in the gratification of his senses, who loves not the world, neither the things that are in the world; but has set his heart upon the practice of virtue. The life of that man is a blessing not only to himself, but to all mankind: in his welfare, every one is concerned; and he is an object universally loved and respected. Slander or calumny have no shafts against him: nor can fortune, by robbing him of his riches, deprive him of his peace of mind. If envy or malignity speak ill of the virtuous man, he finds a comfort in his own conscience; and in the exercise of his duties, an encouragement to forgive and return good for evil. The ingratitude he meets with puts not an end to his benevolence; he does not give, that he may make you a slave to his will or his passions; but that

that you may profit by his generosity, and be less miserable,

The indifference most men of fortune betray of doing good, declares either a bad heart, a total ignorance of their duties, or that their reason is fallen a victim to the allurements of pleasure. Under any of these shapes they are a shame to humanity, a scandal to religion, and an evil to society. How men can pride in the debasement of their souls, in the prostitution of the dignity of their nature, in the open contempt of morality, is hardly to be conceived! But that there are such men, and that their number is great, is a fact too notorious to be denied.

Remember, that life only begins but with our reason, and is matured by virtue
and

and religion: for to be religious is to live. From this genuine source we derive the enjoyment of our intellectual faculties; from hence we survey with transport the amazing harmony, beauty, and excellency of the universe. Let him who is desirous of improving life, take reason for his tutor; he will then receive pleasures consonant to a rational being. The book of nature is open to all; but how few that qualify themselves to read it with that divine enthusiasm, which inspires the grateful man, who contemplates the stupendous works of his almighty Creator? How stupid some, even in human knowledge? How few, who can discern the delicate and masterly strokes of the pencil or chissel? How few the inexhaustible charms of wit, genius, and literature—and the delights resulting from the arts—the sciences

sciences—and philosophy? Would you enjoy those refined pleasures, seek occasional solitude. It is ever a friend to the arts—to virtue—and to religion. The Patriarchs of old courted solitude for meditation, and the divine Lawgiver sought converse with his God in the desert. A life of the world may be called a life of business; but in retirement, we cultivate true benevolence, and a virtuous intercourse with one another. Here the soul possesses stability and ease, while, hope, love, and joy, know no satiety. Here the soul enters into a commerce with heaven, and soars into the regions of eternity!

O! lost to virtue, lost to manly thought,

Lost to the noble sallies of the soul!

Who think it SOLITUDE to be alone.

Communion sweet! communion large and
high!

Our reason, guardian angel, and our God!

The

The great, born with the power of satisfying every desire, cannot be sensible to wants they never knew: this is an excuse invented by that pride, which is charitable only thro' ostentation. Have they no eyes, no ears, to convince them of the distress of their fellow creatures? Do they not hear every day of honest tradesmen dragged to gaol by the barbarous savageness of their inhuman creditors? of an industrious family brought by unexpected accidents to a want of the necessaries of life? of men and women found starved to death by cold or hunger? Are not their eyes perpetually stricken with the sight of objects worthy of their pity? whose looks or garments entreat their generosity. In vain do they shut their hearts to compassion: they are not so sunk by luxury in the arms of insensibility, as to be deaf to the
voice

voice of nature. Though experience has not taught them what misery is, reflection has pointed to them the troubles and anxieties attending it. Like the healthy man who, tho' a stranger to bodily pain, cannot help commiserating the infirm, and being sensibly affected at the sight of the unfortunate.

It is not for not knowing that there are wretches in need of their support, that rich men are dead to the feelings of benevolence ; from their pride springs their want of charity. Could the benefits they would confer be known to all the world, they would not only seize every opportunity of doing good ; but even be the first to solicit the benefaction of other friends in favour of the poor. Let a fire burn a town to ashes, let an inundation deprive the inhabitants of several

villages of their subsistence, a subscription is presently proposed and filled up: will you know whether humanity or pride has caused so many names to be put upon that ostentatious list? Whisper to every one of these pretended generous subscribers, that the widow of an officer, left with three or four children, lies with her half-expiring family in a garret upon straw, destitute of bread, and of the means of earning it; that through a series of misfortunes an ingenious artist, unable to support his wife and children, is soliciting relief—a cold “I cannot help it,” I am afraid, would be their answer.

The truly charitable man finds in himself the reward of his liberality; as he does not found his happiness upon the opinion of the world, but upon the approbation

probation of his own heart; he does good, for the sake of doing it, and draws no glory from an act he thinks it his duty to perform. Thus should all Christians behave: thus should those who love God, have him perpetually in their thoughts, that he may be the sole cause of their generous actions.

Though charity be serviceable to the wretch who receives it, it is of no benefit to the man who bestows it, unless to comply with the commandments of God, rather than to gratify his own vanity: should his vanity be ever so beneficial to his fellow-creatures, he loses the merit of the good he does to them; and has upon that account no more claim to the rewards promised to a charitable man than a miser, who in a fit of drunkenness,

ness, would open his treasure and distribute it to the poor.,

“ He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.”

This commandment we do not obey, by wishing only prosperity to the miserable, or turning them from our presence in a gentle manner, and with benevolent words.

If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be you warmed and filled, notwithstanding you give them not these things which are needful, what doth it profit? Pull out your purse and empty it in the hand of the wretch who craves for your assistance; give and it shall be given to you; given

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to you infinitely above the value of what you shall give. He wants, and therefore has a right to your pity: you cannot be a judge of the accidents that have reduced him to the necessity of begging of you: look upon him as an object God has provided for the exertion of your virtue. Let not partiality influence your generosity: the most miserable hath the more lawful title to it. Give not to please a friend, or to get rid of the beggar who solicits your bounty; give, because it is your duty to make as many happy as it is in your power; because by giving you obey the commandment of God, and insure to yourself an everlasting happiness.

This virtue is so lovely, I wonder it does not animate every heart: that the delights it procures are not preferred to the sensations arising from a life of dissipation and pleasure. Can there be a being more happy than

than the man, who is conscious of having done his duty; of having led a virtuous life? Does he not enjoy a peace of mind the sole real good to be wished for in this world? He can look into himself and be pleased with the sight; he can at night recollect every action of the day, and give way to sleep, without the fear of being unexpectedly visited by death; he can rejoice in the midst of torments, happy in the hope of a future state.

This is not a chimerical picture: every one of you has sometimes been just, charitable, and merciful, and felt the satisfaction I have described: had you persevered in the exercise of mercy, justice, and charity, every day would have been marked with the same heavenly content: the possessing of that bliss would have excited you to preserve it,

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and destroyed in your heart, all the seeds of vice and inhumanity.

The practice of one virtue leads naturally to the performance of all others: it is impossible to forgive your enemies, and at the same time covet your neighbour's wife;—to be charitable, and at the same time to deprive a man of his property;—to be just, and at the same time to perjure yourself. Whoever has been good, honest, or virtuous once, has it in his power to be always so.

Every man is in pursuit of happiness, from the prince to the peasant; from the learned to the ignorant; from the righteous to the unjust: but we all know, that in the career we all miss the goal, unless reason and religion are the chariot wheels. The latter ever had, and always will bear,

bear, the test of her divinity. And from hence we conclude, that the design of the Deity in promulging his laws, was to advance the happiness of his creatures. "He that keepeth the law," said the wisest of men, "happy is he. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left riches and honour."

Beware what earth calls *Happiness*; beware
All joys, but joys that never can expire.
Who builds on less than an immortal base,
Fond as he seems, condemns his joys to death.

God has adapted his commandments to our nature, and endued us with the faculties he thought the best to enable us to obey him; no pretence is therefore left to man to justify his disobedience.

*Beware of being an almost Christian.
It is a sort of neutrality between vice and
virtue. If there be no stability in our
faith,*

faith, no warmth in our devotion, no spiritual stimulus to duty, no desire in hope, Religion is without a soul, and becomes the shell only of inanimated virtue.

DEVOTION when lukewarm is indevout ;
 But when it glows, its heat is struck to heav'n ;
 To human hearts her golden harps are strung ;
 High heav'n's orchestra chaunts Amen to man.

The man who shuts his eyes to the light, will not convince him who keeps his own open, that it is dark ; thus, the life of a vicious man is no demonstration of the necessity of vice : it proves only, that he has surrendered his reason to the errors which captivate his senses.

There is a charm in doing good so extremely alluring, that it precludes all other sensations. It is a bliss so superior, that our reason only can enjoy it ; it
 never

never loses its novelty; which being the sole attraction of sensual pleasures, dies away with the gratifications of them; unattended by disgust, it perpetuates the desire of its possession to the last hour of life. Such is the delight God has attached to the performance of our duties.

Can there be a more amiable character than he, who is a sanctuary to the oppressed, a patron to merit and virtue, a counsellor to the helpless, and a supporter to the afflicted? Surely no. This is *vital humanity*—this is a noble and useful employment of our time: those of a contrary character, I address in the words of Dr. Young.

O TIME! than gold more sacred; more a
load

Than lead, to fools; and fools reputed wise.

What moment granted man without account?

What

What many years are squander'd, wisdom's
debt unpaid,

Our wealth in days all due to that discharge.
Haste, haste, he lies in wait, he's at the door,
Insidious Death! should his strong hand arrest,
No composition sets the pris'ner free :
Eternity's inexorable chain
Fast binds; and vengeance claims the full
arrears.

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